



# **CYBERSTALKING: HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF**

**Roy Cooper**  
**North Carolina Attorney General**

**[www.ncdoj.com](http://www.ncdoj.com)**

---

The Internet era ushered in a new type of stalking, called “cyberstalking.” It can occur when a friendship goes sour but in most cases the victim does not know the cyberstalker.

Generally, cyberstalking involves repeated annoying or threatening behavior, such as:

- following your movements on the Internet;
- posting lies about you online;
- forming online relationships with your friends to get more information about you;
- sending frequent, unwanted communications;
- causing electronic disruptions from viruses.

Cyberstalkers use the anonymity of the Internet to try to get away with such tactics, but these acts are illegal in North Carolina and should be reported to local law enforcement.

Under the law, cyberstalking is defined as communication and acts that are intentional, directed at a specific person and that serve no legitimate purpose except to annoy, alarm and abuse someone.

Online harassment becomes cyberstalking when it changes from annoying to frightening and may become dangerous. One email from someone usually does not constitute harassment, and “spam” (unsolicited email) is not harassment, though it may be annoying.

## ***What to do if you are bothered by a cyberstalker***

Your email account settings or instant messaging software may allow you to block further messages from the sender. If you are being threatened or harassed online, you may want to contact your Internet Service Provider, or ISP. You can report the harassment or threats to your ISP and the harasser’s ISP if you know which ISP the harasser uses. You can ask that the harasser’s account be suspended or blocked.

If someone threatens you with violence, contact law enforcement officials immediately.

## Cyberstalking Tips

- Save the original message. Don't delete or erase threatening emails from your mailbox or voicemail. Forward the entire original message to law enforcement. A printed copy of the email or an excerpt from it will not be as useful as the original email message that you received.
- Don't respond to messages from people you don't know, and don't engage in any communications with a harasser.
- Keep a log of the times and dates of any abusive incidents.
- Consider contacting a victims' rights group for advice and support.

National Center for Victims of Crime:

Click [here](#) to visit the Stalking Resource Center.

Victim Assistance Line 1-800-FYI-CALL (M-F 8:30 AM – 8:30 PM)